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10/662,073	09/12/2003	Richard Norris Dodge II	14,596	9799	
23556 KIMBERLY-CLARK WORLDWIDE, INC. Catherine E. Wolf			EXAM	EXAMINER	
			REICHLE, KARIN M		
401 NORTH LAKE STREET NEENAH, WI 54956		ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER		
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Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Application No. Applicant(s) 10/662.073 DODGE ET AL. Office Action Summary Examiner Art Unit Karin M. Reichle 3761 -- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --Period for Reply A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS. WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION. Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication. If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication - Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b). Status 1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 15 January 2008. 2a) ☐ This action is FINAL. 2b) This action is non-final. 3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under Ex parte Quayle, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213. Disposition of Claims 4) Claim(s) 1-9.12-20 and 22-26 is/are pending in the application. 4a) Of the above claim(s) is/are withdrawn from consideration. 5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed. 6) Claim(s) 1-9,12-20 and 22-26 is/are rejected. 7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to. 8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement. Application Papers 9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner. 10) The drawing(s) filed on 15 January 2008 is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner. Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a). Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d). 11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152. Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119 12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f). a) All b) Some * c) None of: Certified copies of the priority documents have been received. 2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)). * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received. Attachment(s) 1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) 4) Interview Summary (PTO-413)

Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)

Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
 Paper No(s)/Mail Date _______

Paper No(s)/Mail Date.

6) Other:

Notice of Informal Patent Application

DETAILED ACTION

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on 1-15-08 has been entered.

Specification

The lengthy specification has not been checked to the extent necessary to determine the presence of all possible minor errors. Applicant's cooperation is requested in correcting any errors of which applicant may become aware in the specification.

For example:

Drawings

- The drawings were received on 1-15-08. These drawings are approved. See however the following paragraph.
- 2. The drawings are objected to because in Figure 7, the arrow from 600 should be dashed to indicate underlying structure. Also, the absorbent composites in new Figures 11-15, i.e. different embodiments of a composite, are all numbered by the same numeral, i.e. 701, which numeral was also used to describe another embodiment set forth at page 37, lines 31-32, i.e. the

different embodiments should be denoted by different numerals. Corrected drawing sheets in compliance with 37 CFR 1.121(d) are required in reply to the Office action to avoid abandonment of the application. Any amended replacement drawing sheet should include all of the figures appearing on the immediate prior version of the sheet, even if only one figure is being amended. The figure or figure number of an amended drawing should not be labeled as "amended." If a drawing figure is to be canceled, the appropriate figure must be removed from the replacement sheet, and where necessary, the remaining figures must be renumbered and appropriate changes made to the brief description of the several views of the drawings for consistency. Additional replacement sheets may be necessary to show the renumbering of the remaining figures. Each drawing sheet submitted after the filing date of an application must be labeled in the top margin as either "Replacement Sheet" or "New Sheet" pursuant to 37 CFR 1.121(d). If the changes are not accepted by the examiner, the applicant will be notified and informed of any required corrective action in the next Office action. The objection to the drawings will not be held in abeyance.

Description

3. 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, requires the specification to be written in "full, clear, concise, and exact terms." The specification is replete with terms which are not clear, concise and exact. The specification should be revised carefully in order to comply with 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph. Examples of some unclear, inexact or verbose terms used in the specification are: page 6, line 33.

4. The disclosure is objected to because of the following informalities: 1) The Summary of the Invention section on page 3, i.e. a description of the claimed invention, and the invention of the claims are still not commensurate in scope. 2) At the very least, see the discussion infra, the description of the invention is inconsistent. For example, the neutralization of the superabsorbent material as claimed is still not consistent with what is disclosed in the Examples 1-8. Therefore, at the very least a consistent description of what the invention is should be set forth throughout the specification. 3) As discussed supra, the absorbent composites in new Figures 11-15, i.e. different embodiments of a composite, are all numbered by the same numeral, i.e. 701, see the amendments to pages 7-9 of 1-15-08, which numeral was also used to describe another embodiment set forth at page 37, lines 31-32, i.e. the different embodiments should be denoted by different numerals.

Appropriate correction is required.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

5. Claims 1-9, 12-20 and 22-26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the written description requirement. The claim(s) contains subject matter which was not described in the specification in such a way as to reasonably convey to one skilled in the relevant art that the inventor(s), at the time the application was filed, had possession of the claimed invention. The claims now require a superabsorbent material which has an Absorption Time of about 5+10 a2 minutes or greater, wherein a is the mean particle size of the superabsorbent material in millimeters, and an equilibrium absorption capacity of about 15 g/g or greater as measured by the FAUZEL test and which has been neutralized from 30 mole % to 65

mole % with a monovalent metal hydroxide, and further from 5 mole % to 40 mole % with a divalent metal hydroxide. Applicant cites a plurality of places for support for such added claim language in the first full paragraph of page 15 of the 1-15-08 response. However, while such places provide support for a specific wt % of acrylic acid being first neutralized with sodium hydroxide to one specific mole percentage, e.g. 60% at page 11, lines 19-20, 50% at page 12, line 6, 30% at page 12, line 29, 40% at page 13, line 15, 30% at page 14, line 5, 55% at page 14, line 30, 50% at page 15, line 16 and 65% at page 16, line 5 and then neutralized with a divalent metal hydroxide, i.e. a further 10% with calcium hydroxide, a further 20% with calcium hydroxide, a further 40% with calcium hydroxide, a further 30 % with magnesium hydroxide, a further 40% with calcium hydroxide, a further 15% with calcium hydroxide, a further 20% with magnesium hydroxide and a further 55% with calcium hydroxide, respectively, and then still further specifically processed, e.g. other additional materials, coatings, etc., this is not what is claimed, as best understood, see discussion in paragraphs 8-9 infra. Additionally, the support, i.e. the Examples, relied upon by Applicant result in materials or composites which have a combination of properties, see, e.g., Table 1 on page 17, which are not the combinations claimed. For example, see the Measured Absorption Time of Examples 7 and 8 relied upon and that claimed in claims 3 and 14 and the Gel Bed Permeability of Examples 3 and 4 and that claimed in claims 4 and 15 and that the property of 1/2 Float Saturation is no longer claimed at all. If Applicant maintains such claim language, the portion of the original application which provides support for the scope of the entire combination of each claim in a single embodiment should be set forth, e.g. each possible combination of mole percents of the monovalent and divalent hydroxides set forth in the respective ranges in combination with a claimed Time and capacity.

e.g. where is the support for a superabsorbent which includes a Time and capacity as claimed which has been neutralized 30 mole percent with a monovalent hydroxide and further from 5 mole percent with a divalent hydroxide? The same as the former but further from 6 mole percent? from 7 mole percent, etc? The same as the first but neutralized 31 mole percent with the monovalent hydroxide?

6. Claims 1-9, 12-20, and 22-26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the enablement requirement. The claim(s) contains subject matter which was not described in the specification in such a way as to enable one skilled in the art to which it pertains, or with which it is most nearly connected, to make and/or use the invention.

As set forth in MPEP 2164.04, the Examiner has the initial burden to establish a reasonable basis to question the enablement provided for the claimed invention. While the analysis and conclusion of a lack of enablement are based on the factors discussed in MPEP 2164.01(a) and the evidence as a whole, it is not necessary to discuss each factor in the written rejection. The language should focus on those factors, reasons and evidence that lead the examiner to conclude the specification fails to teach how to make and use the claimed invention without undue experimentation or that the scope of enablement provided to one skilled in the art is not commensurate with the scope of protection sought by the claims.

First, what is the claimed invention? As set forth in each of the independent claims, the invention is an absorbent composite which <u>comprises</u> superabsorbent material. The superabsorbent material, as best understood, is selected for use therein based on 1) specific desired physical characteristics including its Absorption Time, equilibrium absorption capacity and Gel Bed Permeability and 2) has been specifically neutralized, and the absorbent composite,

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i.e. the superabsorbent material alone or in combination with other material, is selected for use therein based on 1) specific desired physical characteristics. Therefore, the claims necessarily also define the invention by the tests or processes used to determine the selection of the superabsorbent used and the physical characteristics 1) of such, e.g. the superabsorbent prior to combination with further composite components, if any, the fibers rather than setting forth specific superabsorbent compositions or specific superabsorbent/composite combination compositions of the end product, and the tests or processes used to determine the selection of the composite used and the physical characteristics 1) of such, i.e. not the specific superabsorbent/composite combination compositions of the end product.

Second, since the claimed physical characteristics 1) of the superabsorbent prior to combination with the composite to form the end product must be determined and the claimed physical characteristics 1) of the composite must be determined, e.g., by a test used to measure such characteristic, the scope of the claims is enabled to the extent the test, i.e. the method and equipment or parameters thereof, measuring such characteristic is described or disclosed.

In the instant application, for example, the claims require a superabsorbent material which has a specific equilibrium absorption capacity and Absorption Time. While on pages 29-31, a test called "FAUZL" is set forth which measures "a <u>final</u> equilibrium absorption capacity" (emphasis added) and "Absorption Time" using a timer capable of reading 120 minutes, it is still not clear such capacity claimed is the same as the "<u>final</u> equilibrium absorption capacity" (emphasis added) described (Note page 31, lines 6-8 and 15-16, i.e. each measurement is an "equilibrium absorption capacity" whereas the "final equilibrium absorption capacity" is an specifically calculated average) and it is described that there are instances where measurement of

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200 minutes not just 120 minutes are required but equipment and the method of measurement have still not been set forth for those instances. In other words, the tests used to measure the claimed physical characteristics are not described or disclosed at all or sufficiently, i.e. not enabled, and thus, the claims relying on such are not enabled.

Third, the claims set forth the physical characteristics desired of the starting SAM, as best understood, rather than the specific composition of the SAM or SAM/composite in the end product. Therefore, relying on Ex parte Slob, 157 USPQ 172, such claims could cover any conceivable combination of materials whether presently existing or which might be discovered in the future and which would impart the desired characteristic, i.e. the claims are too broad and indefinite since purport to cover everything having the characteristics regardless of its composition (It should be noted that 35 USC 101 sets forth "Whoever invents or discovers any new and useful...composition of matter...may obtain a patent therefor...title, i.e. does not include compositions that have yet to be invented and discovered.) Note also, for example, the specification at page 5, first full paragraph, e.g. "may include".

Fourth, and similarly, the claims do not set forth any <u>structure</u> of the composite but the superabsorbent, i.e. claims could cover any conceivable SAM material either presently existing or which may be discovered in the future. The claims do not set forth that the article is only SAM, i.e. the claims could cover any conceivable present or future absorbent material which includes at least SAM. The claims do not set forth a specific process by which the SAM of the article is made into the composite, i.e. the claims could cover any conceivable present or future process of making. In other words, the claims could cover any conceivable present or future absorbent composite end product which includes SAM. Note again Ex parte Slob, supra.

Fifth, the lack of enabling description is now further exacerbated for the reasons set forth in paragraph 5 supra and paragraph 8 infra, i.e. the claimed neutralization of the superabsorbent invention is not supported by the original application and/or it is unclear how it is being neutralized as claimed.

For these reasons and evidence, the examiner concludes the specification fails to teach how to make and use the claimed invention without undue experimentation or that the scope of enablement provided to one skilled in the art is not commensurate with the scope of protection sought by the claims.

7. Claims 1-9, 12-20 and 22-26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the written description requirement. The claim(s) contains subject matter which was not described in the specification in such a way as to reasonably convey to one skilled in the relevant art that the inventor(s), at the time the application was filed, had possession of the claimed invention. As set forth in MPEP 2163, the issue of a lack of adequate written description may arise even for an original claim when an aspect of the claimed invention has not described with sufficient particularity such that one skilled in the art would recognize that the Applicant had possession of the claimed invention. The claimed invention as a whole may not be adequately described if the claims require an essential or critical feature which is not adequately described in the specification and which is not conventional in the art to or known to one of ordinary skill in the art. Further, as set forth in Fujikawa v. Wattanasin, 93 F.3d 1559, 1571, the lack of adequate written description also arises if the knowledge and level of skill in the art would not permit one skilled in the art to immediately envisage the product claimed from the disclosed process. As discussed in the preceding rejection, the tests which are essential or

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critical to the selection of the claimed superabsorbent and/or composite have not been disclosed or disclosed sufficiently, there is a lack of disclosure, and, at the very least, definite claiming of any specific composite or end product composition which is supported by the original application, and the claims are too broad in that the claims cover any conceivable combination of ingredients either presently existing or which may be discovered in the future and which may impart the desired characteristics. Therefore, the claimed invention as a whole is not adequately described because the claims require an essential or critical feature which is not adequately described in the specification and which is not conventional in the art to or known to one of ordinary skill in the art and the knowledge and level of skill in the art would not permit one skilled in the art to immediately envisage the product claimed from the disclosed process (Note again, e.g., the first full paragraph on page 5 of the disclosure, i.e. a nonconventional approach using superabsorbent material which may include ranges of properties, i.e. properties defined by nonenabled tests, and, e.g., the Summary of the Invention section on page 3 and the paragraph bridging pages 5-6, especially the use of the terminology "may", i.e. the composites may have superabsorbent materials which may include certain properties which may address certain deficiencies). Therefore, one skilled in the art would recognize that the Applicant did not have possession of the claimed invention.

8. Claims 1-9, 12-20 and 22-26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

In claims 1, 12 and 23 it unclear how the superabsorbent has been neutralized, i.e. how can the superabsorbent be neutralized from 30 to 65 mole % with a monovalent hydroxide and

yet also "further from" 5 to 40 mole % with a divalent hydroxide? Also, for the reasons also set forth supra, the claims are indefinite, vague and too broad, see Ex parte Slob, supra.

Claim Language Interpretation

9. The terminology "superabsorbent material" and "target area" will be interpreted as set forth on page 5, lines 13-16 and page 6, line 16. It is noted with respect to the latter that the terminology "the immediate vicinity" is considered relative absent claiming of specific dimensions. All other claim language will given their usual, i.e. dictionary, definition. It is noted that lines 6-8 of claim 1 and similar language in claims 12 and 23 describe the processing of the superabsorbent material, i.e. a product by process, see MPEP 2113. However, due to the lack of clarity set forth supra in paragraph 8, a composite, product or garment as claimed in claims 1, 12 and 23, respectively, which includes a superabsorbent which is neutralized at least 30 mole percent by at least one of a monovalent or divalent metal hydroxide at some time prior to the completion of the manufacture of the end product will be considered to meet the claim limitation.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102/103

- 10. The text of those sections of Title 35, U.S. Code not included in this action can be found in a prior Office action.
- Claims 1-9, 12-20 and 22-26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Dow PCT '818.

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In regard to claims 1-4 and 24, see, e.g., the Claim Language Interpretation section supra and '818 at the abstract, page 3, last full paragraph, page 5, first through third full paragraphs, page 6, line 19-page 7, line 5, page 7, line 19-page 8, line 19, page 9, lines 5-7 and 16-20, and page 9, line 24-page 14, last line of '818, i.e. an absorbent composite comprising superabsorbent material as disclosed, e.g. superabsorbent material comprising partially neutralized acrylic acid and which has been neutralized to the percentage claimed, as best understood, see the Claim Language Interpretation section supra and page 6, lines 19 et seq, i.e. at least 30 mole %, by alkali metal hydroxides, including specific mention of sodium hydroxide (alkali metals include calcium also), an internal crosslinking agent, a surface cross-linking agent, a capacity greater than 25/g/g and an Absorption Rate Index which is a time which equals about 10+10 a2 as claimed (It is noted that, especially due to the lack of enablement, it is unclear whether this time is the same as the claimed "Absorption Time" or not). Thus the Dow reference clearly teaches all the claimed structure and properties except for the characteristics of "Absorption Time" and the Gel Bed Permeability of the superabsorbent material as claimed. However, as noted supra, Dow does teach similar materials for similar purposes and same or substantially similar properties, i.e. a capacity and a slow absorption time. It is also again noted such characteristics are those of the superabsorbent making up the claimed composite, and such material, as now best understood, is, as best understood, tested prior to formation of such composite by the disclosed tests or processes, i.e. the specific characteristics of such material of the end product composite are unknown, and those of the composite, i.e. the specific characteristics of the end product composite are also unknown. Therefore it is the Examiner's first position that for the reasons set forth supra, i.e. same or similar compositions, purposes, desired properties to accomplish such

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purposes, etc., there is reasonable factual basis to conclude that the structure of the Dow also inherently possesses superabsorbent material and an absorbent composite with the claimed test characteristics or values when tested according to Applicants' tests, as best understood. In any case, the Examiner's second position, at the very least, the general conditions of the claim are disclosed by Dow and it is not inventive, i.e. it would be obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art, to discover the optimum or workable ranges, i.e. Applicant's ranges, by routine experimentation, In re Aller, 105 USPQ 233 (CCPA 1955).

Claims 5-9, 12-20, 22-23 and 25-26: See the discussion of claims 1-4 and supra as well as page 9, line 28-page 11, line 13, and thus Kellenberger '335 and '343, Meyer '603, Yarbrough '673 and Gustafsson '082 incorporated thereby which teach the SAM material distributed homogenously within a composite, e.g. '343, zoned within a composite, e.g. '335, 603, '673, '082, within a layer of a plurality of layers of a composite, e.g. '082, '673 or '603, alone or zoned in such layer, e.g. '673, zoned along a perimeter, e.g. '673, or laminated onto a substrate, e.g. '673.

Double Patenting

- The text of those sections of Title 35, U.S. Code not included in this action can be found in a prior Office action.
- 13. Claims 1-9, 12-20 and 22-26 are now rejected on the ground of nonstatutory obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over the claims of U.S. Patent No. 7,285,614 (previously copending Application No. 10/660982) in view of Dow '818. Although the conflicting claims are not identical, they are not patentably distinct from each other because

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since the patent and the instant application have the same effective filing date, the one way In re Vogel test applies, i.e. are the claims of the instant application obvious in view of the patent claims? The answer is yes. The claims of the instant application are both broader and narrower than the '614 claims. With regard to such broader aspects (e.g., the application claims, as best understood, do not require specifics of the composition of superabsorbent material set forth in '614 claims), once an applicant has received a patent for a species or more specific embodiment, he/she is not entitled to a patent for the generic or broader invention. This is because the more specific anticipates the broader, i.e. the patented claims anticipate the application claims. See In re Goodman, supra. It is noted that line 1 of the instant claim 1 requires a composite comprising superabsorbent, e.g. includes 100% superabsorbent. Therefore the application claims are considered to be a polymer as claimed by the '614 claims, see also discussion in the next paragraph. Additionally the claims now the superabsorbent having been neutralized, as best understood, see the Claim Language Interpretation section supra, i.e. a degree of neutralization of at least 30%. However, see the range of the neutralization of the application claims as best understood, i.e. at least 30%, the range of the '614 claims, i.e. "more than about 25%", and MPEP 2131.03, II, i.e. the '614 claims are considered to disclose the claimed subject with "sufficient specificity". In any case, see 2144.05, I and that the claimed ranges at the very least overlap or lie inside ranges disclose by the '614 claims and thereby, a prima facie case of obviousness exists.

Additionally claims 5-10 and 12-23 and 25-26 require features not claimed by the '982 claims in combination with the superabsorbent material. It is also noted that line 1 of claim 1 could be interpreted as requiring more than just superabsorbent material. However, see

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discussion of Dow '818, i.e. known to combine like superabsorbent with features such as those claimed in the instant claims to improve desired characteristics of any absorbent article, e.g. slow rate absorption. Therefore, to employ such claimed features in combination with the SAM of '982 would be obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art in view of the recognition that such features are known to be combined with such SAM to enhance characteristics desired in any absorbent article.

Response to Arguments

14. Applicant's remarks have been carefully considered but are either deemed moot in that the issue discussed has not been reraised or is deemed not persuasive for the reasons set forth supra and/or because such are, e.g. narrower than the claim language. For example, the claims still do not require neutralization from 30 mole percent to 65 mole percent with a monovalent metal hydroxide and neutralized a further 5 mole percent to 40mole percent with a divalent metal hydroxide, i.e. the claim language is "and further from 5 mole % to 40 mole %" not a further 5 mole % to 40 mole percent. For another example, the claims do not require a "final equilibrium absorption capacity" or provide collaboration of assertions set forth in a, i) and ii) on page 19 of the 1-15-08 response.

Conclusion

15. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Karin M. Reichle whose telephone number is (571) 272-4936. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Thursday.

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If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Tanya Zalukaeva can be reached on (571) 272-1115. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see http://pair-direct.uspto.gov. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

/Karin M. Reichle/ Primary Examiner, Art Unit 3761 February 19, 2008